# The Truth about Repentance

Something that I did not understand for a long time was the word 'repentance'. What this word means to many of us today is quite different than what it means to God.

> **REPENT'ANCE, n.**
> **1. Sorrow for any thing done or said; the pain or grief which a person experiences in consequence of the injury or inconvenience produced by his own conduct.**
> **2. In theology, the pain, regret or affliction which a person feels on account of his past conduct, because it exposes him to punishment. This sorrow proceeding merely from the fear of punishment, is called legal repentance, as being excited by the terrors of legal penalties, and it may exist without an amendment of life.**
> **3. Real penitence; sorrow or deep contrition for sin, as an offense and dishonor to God, a violation of his holy law, and the basest ingratitude towards a Being of infinite benevolence. This is called evangelical repentance, and is accompanied and followed by amendment of life.**
> **Repentance is a change of mind, or a conversion from sin to God.**
> **Godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation. 2Cor. 7. Matt. 3.**
> **Repentance is the relinquishment of any practice, from conviction that it has offended God.**
> **Webster's 1828 Dictionary**

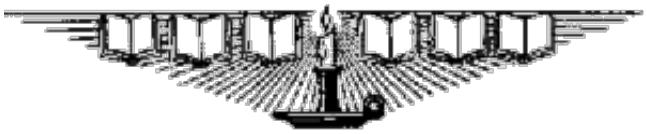
You see, what most of us consider repentance today, saying that we are sorry with our lips, is actually called 'legal repentance'. What this phrase basically means is that we are sorry we've been caught and have to suffer the consequences of our actions. Make no mistake, every single being on Judgment day that stands before Christ will be repentant, but in the case of most that repentance will be legal.

> **But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.**
> **1 Samuel 16:7 (KJV)**

Now when you or I do something wrong and we apologize for it the other person has no way of knowing whether we are really sorry or merely legally repenting in an attempt to avoid the consequences. Since we are using the world 'legal' here I just want to state the obvious; in any legal system on this earth legally repenting does not satisfy the requirement for punishment. We can't murder, rape or rob another person and then expect to get off in a court of law by merely apologizing, right?

But with God it is different; He sees our hearts and knows whether we are genuinely sorry for our sins or not. This really gets to the heart of the matter, because if we are truly sorry over our sins we will try with all our might

to cease from them. We never arrive, but we do move forward. As He sees that our hearts are broken over our sinfulness and that we are making a genuine effort to cease from sinning He will give us the strength to overcome in the areas where we are weak.

> **I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.**
> **Jeremiah 17:10 (KJV)**

But if we continually sin without regret and expect God to wink at it we in grave danger of condemnation on Judgment day. It isn't enough to know that God saw our sin and feel sorry we got caught by Him. He sees our hearts; we must change them to conform to His commandments. And if we have areas of our lives that seem out of control we must not sweep them under the rug but deal with them head on. We must fiercely struggle continuously with them.